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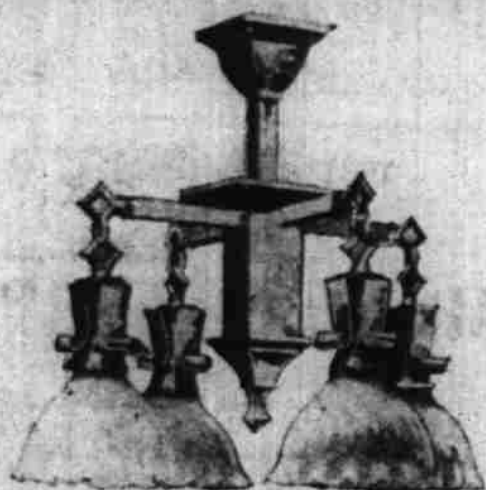
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COMPARISON OF AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

TWO PLANS OUTLINED AS REMEDY FOR PRESENT AMERICAN DIFFICULTIES — ONE WOULD ELIMINATE COUNTY GOVERNMENT ENTIRELY; OTHER WOULD GIVE IT ALL RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES POSSIBLE

BY BERTRAM VON DAMM.

Under this heading the New York Staats Zeitung, the leading American daily printed in German, publishes an article written by Mr. C. M. Loth, an American, which should have considerable interest in this community on account of the unsatisfactory results of city and county government here. The article plainly shows the modern trend of municipal development and the gradual socializing of municipal government in Europe. The writer compares American conditions with German institutions primarily, but this does not impair the value of his work. The foundations of efficiency in municipal government everywhere, are based on the application of concentrated human experience commonly called "science" and experiences, tasks and problems have been very much alike in all civilized countries.

A translation of parts of the article follows:

The modern city is a result of the mighty development of industry. This is true for all civilized countries. The more noticeable the development of a country from an agricultural state to an industrial one, the more rapid has been the growth of its cities, the more difficult also is the solution of the many problems which the administration of the cities offers. No other country in the world has completed the change in as short a time as Germany. It is remarkable, too, that no other country has approached the resulting problems with greater sincerity of purpose and better practical results.

What is the reason? Dr. Frederic C. Howe's latest work on municipal administration in Europe discusses this question in detail and answers it by a continued comparison with corresponding American conditions. His work is a product of frequent studies in Europe, one of his voyages was made for the United States government, another as a member of the Boston Chamber of Commerce; it is at the same time written in defense and a continuation of one of his former works entitled, "The City: the Hope of Democracy."

In the closing chapter of the first above mentioned book, giving a recapitulation of the comparison between the American and European city, the writer says:

"The German city is an experimental station for all of us. It is a 'free state,' a 'small republic' with powers to do almost everything for the welfare of its people. The city is sovereign and uses its sovereignty for its own upbuilding in a purposeful and intelligent manner. It can control its own fate as much as the cities of ancient Greece once could. It controls property as well as men."

Further on he relates parts of an address made by Dr. Sudschum, a member of the German Reichstag, a member of the German Reichstag.

"Municipal administration in Germany has grown into the science of communal life. We are not satisfied with the idea of diligence and honesty in the administration of our cities, we conduct it as a business man would his business. But we have already outgrown that idea. The city is much more than a business venture. It is far more than a political agency. It has become an agency for social welfare with unrestricted possibilities. Our cities strive to place art and science, steam and electricity into the peoples service. We want to socialize industry and knowledge for the common benefit. That is the new motive of our municipal administration. We have learned that this can only be accomplished if the community owns and controls property for the benefit of the people."

Another German, an official of the city of Berlin, addressed the same American commission as follows:

"I have often heard of American business men that they wanted a business administration like that in Germany. But strangely enough these business men consent to giving away through franchises all profitable enterprises and retain only those which are unprofitable. You retain your sewers which cost money, but give away your street railroads, which are profitable. You own your streets and parks, which are unprofitable, but not your gas and electric works, which bring in money. The city of New York took over the ferries when the private owners began to lose money but it gave away its subways, which earned fortunes. We Germans think that this is poor business. We would say that this is not business administration."

We retain the profitable with the unprofitable ventures. I believe that your business men would go into bankruptcy if they conducted their own affairs in a similar manner. At the same time, I have never heard an American business man protest against these "unbusinesslike policies."

The German town is governed by business men, the common council or the municipal assembly are in the majority of business men and this body elects the mayor and the magistrate or municipal council. The business men governing German cities are not small tradesmen or shopkeepers as in Great Britain, nor ward politicians as in America. They are men of affairs, bankers, manufacturers, large merchants, property owners. Mayors and councilmen are specially trained for their work, jurists, engineers, technicians. Berlin has a special "academy of city building" and Dusseldorf, a university of city building and municipal administration. From these sources the rulers of the cities have originated and they took over from private capital all enterprises of profit such as water works, gas works, electrical works, street

railroads, baths, market halls, slaughter houses, because it was good business that the city should do so.

"We are surprised in America that distinguished business and professional men cannot be induced to enter the municipal service. In addition to other reasons the cause is mainly psychological. Dr. Howe says: 'The machinery of municipal administration in America and Europe is distinguished by the difference in ideals on which it is based. With us the belief is current that every official has to have another official to supervise him and if necessary to countermand his orders. The mayor may veto the resolutions of the municipal council; the legislature may rule on the actions of both and the courts of justice are a third instance, which may interfere if they choose. There is a weighing before and after, everywhere are hurdles and obstacles. A private business, conducted on the rules laid down for municipal, state and national governments would go into bankruptcy. Everything in our country is cut out to produce contradiction, delay and conflict. . . . This has little attraction for a man of influence. Municipal government becomes a sort of hurdle race. . . . European municipal administration does not know such impediments. It is not a hurdle race. It is easy for a man to distinguish himself, easy for a councillor to counsel and execute after a decision has been made. That encourages. It attracts men of ability and ambition into political life, because the official is not subject to the veto of half a dozen higher instances.'"

"The German city has no rule, it is free. Free, almost without exception, to take possession of property, free to control the individual and his property, free to make loans, free to experiment, free to develop as it pleases. The ties of a city are so light that they can not be felt. It is subject only to a very general supervision of the interior department. Since he knows that his city is nearly sovereign the average citizen feels as much pride in being a citizen of his particular town as he does in his state or national citizenship."

And later in the same paragraph the writer says: "This freedom of the town is inspiring to its citizens. It has created a love of the town and a pride in it unknown in Great Britain, France or America. That is the reason why a German does not only adore his 'FATHERLAND,' but also his 'FATHERTOWN.'"

People are hard to interest in a subject of which they have no part and which they can not run to suit themselves. It is impossible to inspire them in a matter in which the legislature's permission has first to be obtained, or while they have to fear that the fruit of their victories can be taken from them by the courts or at the next legislative session. Dr. Howe says: "We have committed a crime against all social psychology—a crime so serious that it is a wonder that a communal spirit is still noticeable."

A European citizen pays direct taxes, local taxes, income taxes, taxes on increased valuation of property. The figures on his tax receipt show him clearly his proportion of ownership in the plants and institutions which the city owns and operates. He feels a partner in the business, however small his share may be, and as such takes a direct personal interest in good administration, and acts accordingly on election day.

The author of the above-mentioned book lays down the following principle: "In every country the mind of the man behind the ballot makes a town what it is." And further on he says: "In the long run the trend of thought in a voter is controlled by the power he has and by the possibility of the city to control its own fate. That is a psychological law."

Little has been written about political psychology and in fact but little is known about it. But with all that, the psychology of the voter is the explanation of the city. It determines a man's thoughts and the manner in which he votes. All one has to do is to converse with citizens of a German or a British town in order to find mental attitude entirely different from that prevailing in America, and this can not be reduced to personal or ethnographical causes but to the relationship between the town and its population."

In order to have this relationship properly developed, the citizen on the one hand has to continually feel that the city is concerned about him and cares for him and that those who govern the city know their business. On the other hand this has to be really a fact and the best intentions to accomplish it must exist. The mere fact that city government is in the hands of professionally trained men, that it is conducted in a perfectly businesslike manner and that it is absolutely independent and free, places the German town in advance of the American.

Not all of the article has been translated since not all of it has a bearing on local conditions, but the foregoing should give a clear and concise idea of modern development and of our shortcomings.

What changes should we demand to keep abreast of our time?

First we must demand that science be applied in our municipal government. It is absurd to elect a new board of supervisors every two years from among citizens inexperienced in municipal matters and to expect any degree of efficiency.

Today is the day of the specialist;

no man of affairs would employ anyone but the most skillful and highly trained physician to attend a member of his family; why then should not we as citizens exercise the same judgment in choosing officials to administer the affairs of our sick city?

An expert is needed—a man well paid, whose office is not dependent upon political fortunes, but who is certain of his position as long as his services are satisfactory.

This suggests our second demand. Secondly, we must demand civil service for all municipal officers and trained employees. A small step in the right direction is the "civil service" provision inaugurated by Senator Wirtz, and it is to be hoped that the unquestioned ability of the men composing the Civil Service Commission will be sufficient to make a marked success of this first trial. This they can do if politics play no part in their deliberations. This takes us to demand three.

Third, we must demand that party politics be entirely eliminated in municipal affairs. To this end municipal elections should be held not often than every four years and not at the same time as our legislative elections. They should be made entirely non-partisan and public opinion should be so influenced during the next 12 months that provisions to that effect would have to be incorporated in next year's party platforms and that the coming legislature would have to pass a suitable law.

Fourth, the commission form of government should be adopted for this municipality. Commissioners should be elected to serve without pay. They should have legislative and appointive powers and act in a manner similar to that of a board of directors of a corporation. The city manager to be responsible to them alone, in him to be vested executive and administrative powers.

The federal government is expending in this territory many millions of dollars every year, and there are very nearly 10,000 soldiers stationed on this island. If rumors are correct, this number will be greatly supplemented and probably doubled. I understand that some people believe that the military and federal governments should have some influence on local municipal affairs, since a very large proportion of our population is composed of U. S. soldiers and employees. If the public shares this belief, then the territorial governor and (or) one of the high military men stationed here might be made ex-officio members of such a committee, possibly without a vote.

Fifth: Give the municipal government all the responsibilities and all the freedom possible.

In my opinion there are but two ways out of our municipal difficulties, either we do away with the county government entirely, or we give it all the rights, privileges and responsibilities in our power to give. Give a commission as outlined above, our strict confidence; give it power to issue bonds for the purchase of income-bearing public service institutions, to grant and cancel franchises, to condemn property hand over to it all those public institutions serving the municipality now under the territorial government and give it full power over all departments and department heads. Make elections "non-partisan." Do not pay the commissioners a salary, but make the position one of honor to be bestowed by the public upon men of quality only. I am certain that under those conditions every business man in the city would be just as anxious to serve this community as he is now anxious to keep away. His personal interests would demand it.

I believe that a revolution of our municipal system is necessary and imminent. It is inevitable in the long run, because circumstances will be stronger than all objections.

Police Commissioner Kuhl of San Francisco declares that the notoriously famous "Barbary Coast" of that city should be completely wiped out.

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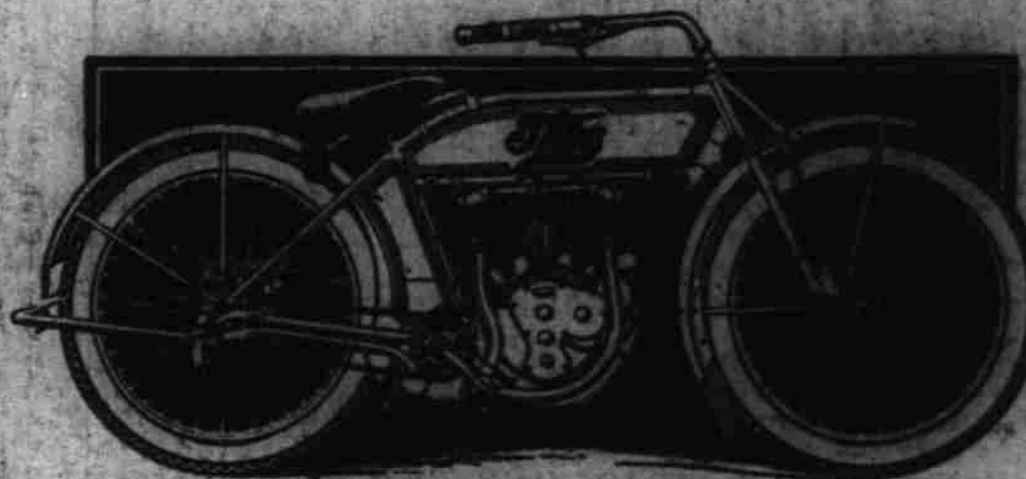
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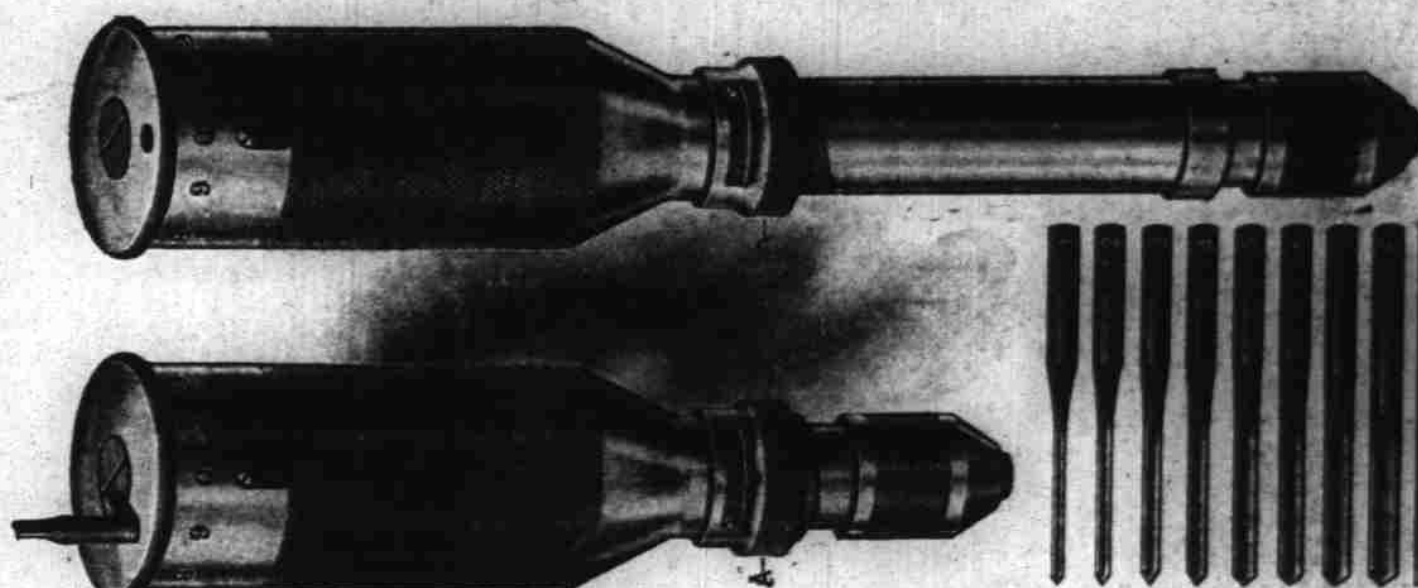
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